

To "re-skin" this airplane costs \$26 million. Does it make sense to do that to 100 planes? Mr. President, \$26 million is an awful lot of money to fix one problem with one 41-year-old plane.

After you have replaced the skin of the aircraft, it is probably going to need new engines. That is not cheap. To put a new engine in 100, 125 tankers is going to cost \$3 billion. That is a lot of money for a 41-year-old airplane.

There are other parts that need to be replaced. It would be one thing if you could fix them all today, but it takes a long time to overhaul these tankers. Right now, we are overhauling four a year. At a certain point, it is just not worth dumping money into these old planes.

K-135s were first delivered to the Air Force in 1957. On average, they are 41-year-olds, and we are paying for it. They have been around longer than most of the people who are flying them. There is no question they must be replaced with new tankers; the only question is when.

I would love for us to be able to buy these new tankers today, but there is not enough money in the Air Force's procurement budget. So many of us in Congress have worked very hard to work out a more flexible approach, an approach that is used with commercial aircraft all the time.

In December, Congress approved, and the President signed, legislation to authorize the Air Force to negotiate with Boeing on a 10-year lease of 100 new 767 aircraft to use as air tankers. Congress has authorized the lease program for both the 767 and the 737 aircraft. My colleagues will recall that the bill to authorize these lease programs for the Air Force was approved by this Senate 96 to 4.

I also want to remind my colleagues what the Secretary of the Air Force, James Roche, wrote to me in a letter. I will quote:

The KC-135 fleet is the backbone of our Nation's Global Reach. But with an average age of over 41 years, coupled with the increasing expense required to maintain them, it is readily apparent that we must start replacing these critical assets. I strongly endorse beginning to upgrade this critical warfighting capability with new Boeing 767 tanker aircraft.

That is from Air Force Secretary James Roche.

My home State of Washington is home to the 92nd Air Refueling Wing. There are approximately 60 air refueling tankers that are based outside of Spokane, WA. I have been to Fairchild. I have visited personally with the families. I know the difficult missions these crews handle for each one of us every single day. And I know the men and women of the 92nd Air Refueling Wing need these aircraft.

The Senator from Arizona talks about leasing aircraft as if the lives of our men and women in uniform were not at stake. I remind my colleagues that we are talking about equipping young American pilots and the missions they support to go forward with the greatest opportunity to succeed.

Mr. President, I encourage the Senate, tomorrow, to table the McCain amendment.

I thank my colleagues, and I yield the floor.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, the events of the past 11 months have forced every American to become more vigilant against the threats to our nation's security. I want to commend the chairman, Senator INOUE, and the ranking member, Senator STEVENS, for bringing to the floor a bill that responds to such threats by better protecting our Nation's citizens as well as our servicemen and women.

Even before the attacks of September 11th of last year, however, our Nation's military began to see that traditional notions of warfare and defense would have to evolve to meet new and ever more dangerous threats. The bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen, for example, made clear to us that our naval forces must be equipped with the most advanced surveillance and response vessels available.

It is for this reason that I have an amendment in support of the Navy's development and demonstration of the SeaLion craft. This vessel, designed for coastal area operations here in the United States and abroad, has already begun to prove itself capable of meeting the challenges faced by our Navy today, and well into the future.

Military operations in coastal areas involve significantly different challenges from deep water operations, such as reduced operational space and environmental clutter. Accordingly, surveillance, weapon systems and naval tactics designed for deep water operations are inadequate for the complex environmental and dimensional aspects of the coastal battle space. In such areas, small boats can effectively protect coastal installations, combat blue water navies, and hinder freedom of navigation for these navies and their supply ships.

The rapidly evolving nature of maritime warfare, the threat of terrorist activities against our naval forces abroad, and the need to protect our own ports here at home: each of these challenges require that the United States make a concerted effort to maintain a solid lead in the development of advanced technologies for coastal operations.

The SeaLion craft is perfectly positioned to support this role. It is a high speed, low-radar-signature vessel whose unique versatility lends itself to a broad spectrum of mission applications, from surveillance to interdiction to engagement. The SeaLion has already received strong endorsement from the Naval Sea Systems Command for its utility in special operations, and is poised for further evaluation as part of the Navy's Littoral Combat Ship platform.

This amendment would allow \$8 million of funds appropriated by the bill to be used for the continued development, demonstration and evaluation of the

SeaLion vessel. I ask for my colleagues' support.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PLAYING CHESS WITH HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, if I may, while the ranking Republican member of the Appropriations Committee is completing an appointment outside the Chamber, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order for not to exceed 30 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. I ask unanimous consent that my remarks appear at someplace in the RECORD other than in association with the Defense appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, in response to the terrorist acts of September 11, the Bush administration—like so many other administrations before it—has chosen to demonstrate its tough stand against something. In the case of the Bush administration, it is a tough stand against terrorism and its concern for the safety and well-being of the American people by boldly maneuvering the Federal chess pieces to create a new Department called Homeland Security.

It is an impressive move, Mr. President—this reorganization of the Government. Many say that it is the greatest reorganization during the past half century. I think it could very well be said that it is the greatest reorganization since the Founding Fathers reorganized the Government in 1787.

At that particular time, the 13 colonies—by then 13 States—had been under the operation of the Articles of Confederation. And many of those who served in the Senate in 1789 had been Members of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation and had been Members of the Continental Congress, which first met on September 5, 1774. The Framers of the U.S. Constitution reorganized our Government so that when their work product had been ratified by the States—the required number of nine for ratification—we then became the United States of America. We were no longer under the Articles of Confederation. That constituted a reorganization of our Government.

But I am talking about a reorganization that is being proposed today. I say that it is the most massive reorganization that has occurred since the Framers reorganized the Government

through the ratifying conventions and the ratifications by the requisite necessary number of States—reorganized the Government so that it was no longer a government under the Articles of Confederation. Rather, it was the United States Government under the United States Constitution.

As to the current proposal, it is no wimpy reorganization. To check terrorism within our borders, the administration has proposed to establish a massive new Department of Homeland Security. It will be a Department so large that it will affect an estimated 170,000 Federal employees and will constitute the largest Department—the third largest—after the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

From what I have read, the thousands of workers of this proposed Department will be doing essentially the same job they are already doing, but they will be doing it under a different newly consolidated roof with different lines of authority. Why the administration seems to think that these workers will perform their duties better just because they are transferred to a new agency has both bothered and baffled me until late last week.

Last week, President Bush let it be known that if any version of the Department of Homeland Security passes the Congress which ensures Civil Service protections, collective bargaining rights, and other provisions to safeguard Federal workers' rights and protections, he will veto it.

At first, I thought this was simply another of the usual pokes at Federal workers. There is the unfortunate implication in the President's veto threat that the current Federal workforce is so full of slackers—there are some there, no doubt—but it is so full of slackers and ineptitude that he may need to get rid of them all and hire a new Federal force.

But then as I thought about the President's claims that the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security will need the ability—get this—to act “without all kinds of bureaucratic rules and obstacles,” I began to have other concerns about the Bush administration's intentions.

It may be that this White House crowd, comprised of CEOs, corporate managers, and other wealthy business elites, may be seeking to use the Department of Homeland Security to further their efforts to run the Federal Government more like a corporation, seeking freedom to hire and fire dedicated public servants, many of them experts in their fields, at will.

By the way, the actions of CEOs are not exactly models—and I am not talking about all CEOs, of course. But the actions of CEOs we have been reading about recently are not exactly models on which to run much of anything these days, and I hope that I am not detecting the same cavalier attitude about Federal pensions that we have seen in press accounts detailing the horrific pension ripoffs by some of our large corporations.

No one wants to deny the administration the ability to take reasonable steps to foster flexibility within the proposed new agency, but I question the real motivation behind the administration's objections to worker protections. Let's face it, the players in this administration do not have much of a reputation as champions of basic protections for workers.

President Bush is currently pushing the Congress to subject 425,000 Federal jobs to contractor competition by the end of his term. This administration has made it a goal to take Federal jobs and dole them out like candy to private firms, apparently.

In drafting its proposed reorganization, the administration started with a panel of four—four white collar political players; four white collar political players in the bowels of the White House, in the subterranean caverns of the White House.

Who were the geniuses behind this idea? Mr. Andrew Card, a fine gentleman—I like him, a very able man; former Gov. Tom Ridge, a fine gentleman, a very able official, who has had great experience in running the Governor's office in one of our larger States in the Union, one of the States that was among the first 13, by the way. Then there is the White House counsel, I believe his name is Gonzales. I am not sure I know him very well. And then the fourth in this quartet of master planners is none other than Mr. Mitch Daniels, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

So there is the quartet. Not quite the caliber, I would say—although one may wish to debate it—it may be worthy of argumentation—not quite the caliber of the committee of five that wrote the Declaration of Independence: Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, William Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Roger Sherman is the only one of the five who signed all of the founding documents of this great Nation. Now there was a committee of five.

So while there may be some argument as to how one would stack up against the other, I would put my bets on the committee of five that wrote the Declaration of Independence. I will stay with them. No disrespect intended, of course, to the White House committee of four, but they operated in secret in the bowels of the White House. I understand that when the President unveiled this massive monstrosity, some of the Department heads in the Government had not been in on the deal until the day that it was sprung.

It sprang like Aphrodite from the ocean foam. She sprang from the ocean foam and was carried on a leaf to the Island of Crete. She later appeared before the gods on Mount Olympus and, of course, they were dazzled by her beauty. This Homeland Security plan came into being about like that, or one might compare its sudden emergence with the goddess Minerva who sprang

from the forehead of Jove, the forehead of Jupiter. Minerva sprang fully armed and clothed from the forehead of Jove.

That is about the way this thing came into being. That was the genesis of it, down there in the White House. It was conceived in secret and was born in secret, and there we are.

So the administration has given these white-collar political players—there were four of them in the beginning—free rein to move Federal workers around from one agency to the other in the name of homeland defense. That same administration now appears poised to sabotage the pay, the health benefits, and the retirement benefits of the very Federal workers it wants to involve with safeguarding our homeland security.

There is nothing like threatening jobs and health benefits to give a boost, of course, to the morale of the employees of a new and very important Department. This is just what we need to energize our new Homeland Security Department, is it not? They will like that—jeopardize their benefits and their pay and their jobs. Imagine the concentration level of nail-biting employees concerned about where their next paycheck is coming from. Think about that. And what will happen to their families if the Bush administration prevails in freeing itself from the normal restrictions which safeguard Federal workers' rights?

For those who doubt my concerns, I ask them to examine the Bush administration's attitude toward Federal workers. It has been clearly expressed by recent comments. Administration spokesman Ari Fleischer, for example, has said that Federal workers need to be stripped of their rights and protections because managers in the Department of Homeland Security will need the ability to fire a worker who was drunk on the job and as a result allowed terrorists into the country. Great stuff! Great motivation, for a Federal workforce on whom we will rely for our safety, and those of our families and friends and associates, and people all over the country.

I do not see anyone defending drunken workers. Not me. I would not defend a drunken worker. We do not have to strip all Federal workers of their basic rights and threaten their pay and retirement benefits in order to deal with one worker who has been drinking on the job. I certainly do not defend that kind of behavior.

This comment was a needless and irresponsible cheap shot at hundreds of thousands of dedicated, hard-working Federal employees who are laboring day and night in many instances for far less money than they could be earning in the private sector. I think Mr. Fleischer owes them all an apology. Federal workers are not the problem. They are the unsung heroes who are protecting our homeland.

Pause for a moment and think about that. They are the Border Patrol agents. Federal workers are the Border

Patrol agents guarding our 6,000-mile-long borders when we think of both borders with Mexico and Canada. All day, and all night while the rest of us are sleeping, they are guarding those borders, guarding us. Those are Federal workers. They are the Customs Service inspectors who have been working around the clock since September 11 to prevent weapons of mass destruction from being carried in containers through our ports of entry. Those are Federal workers. They are the postal workers who have to think about delivering packages of anthrax. They are the Federal workers who have had to deal with the anthrax threat. What about the Center for Disease Control workers who must confront the hard reality of a possible bioterrorist attack every day?

Federal employees are the rank-and-file workers who do the bulk of the work in securing the homeland, and they will continue to do the bulk of the work in securing this country from sea to shining sea. They are the workers who will do the bulk of the work in securing the homeland but who will receive little of the credit and the glory that go to the administration's political appointees.

The President has asked these Federal employees to be the frontline soldiers in the war on terrorism. They are out there at every hour of the day and the night, somewhere, guarding the ports of this country, guarding the borders of this country, guarding the airports of this country, standing on guard. And the President would reward them by trying to take away their basic labor, civil service rights, and job protections?

I was especially alarmed by OMB Director Mitch Daniels' explanation for stripping Federal workers of their rights. Mr. Mitch Daniels said:

Our adversaries are not encumbered by a lot of rules. Al-Qaida does not have a three foot thick code. This department is going to need to be nimble.

This is a startling, as well as frightening, remark. Since when did al-Qaida become our role model for labor-management relations? I thought we were out to destroy al-Qaida, not emulate them. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. No, they do not have a 3-foot code of rules. Al-Qaida also does not have this code which I hold in my hand, the Constitution of the United States, but we do. We have this code, this Constitution.

Is this administration using the 19th-century industrial robber barons as its role model for labor-management relations? What is going on in the heads of these so-called administration spokesmen? The President had better rein in some of these spokesmen. Destroying the basic rights of Federal workers is not how we should be combating terrorism. The fight against terrorism does not have to be fought by workers stripped of basic labor rights. Denying basic rights and protections to workers always makes recruitment of skilled and experienced employees difficult.

But just as important as the necessity that our Federal workforce be a secure workforce, a workforce composed of employees who know they will be protected from politics, cronyism, and favoritism, it must be a workforce armed with protections that can allow them to speak out about mismanagement without fear of losing jobs.

It is rank-and-file Government workers, who are on the job every day and night, keeping Government operating, protecting you, Mr. President, protecting me, protecting our friends in the fourth estate there in the gallery. These are the Government workers who make the Government function, and they are the Government workers upon whom we now depend to protect us.

I can't help but think of those incredible workers at FEMA who have done such a tremendous job, time and time again, in response to floods in West Virginia and in crisis situations in every other State in the Union. It was a Federal employee of the Customs Service who apprehended a terrorist, Ahmed Ressam, with 134 pounds of explosives in December of 1999 at the border in the State of Washington. Later, the terrorist confirmed that it was his intent to bomb Los Angeles Airport during the 2000 New Year's celebration. These are the players that this administration threatens to strip of their rights and benefits.

The assertion that Federal workers cannot be disciplined under existing Federal guidelines is somewhat of a myth. There are strict performance requirements for Federal workers already in place. There are performance reviews annually and initial hires on probation for 1 year. No new rules are necessary. No new blanket exceptions for basic labor rights are needed by this administration. This administration has not even got legislation in place which clearly identifies the mission of this new Department, and this administration is already trying to blame the Federal workforce for any potential failures that might occur in the future.

Again, I say, slow down. Let's slow down. Let's slow down. Let's slow this proposed legislation down. I am not saying today that I am against a Department of Homeland Security. But what is the rush? What is the rush? Consider carefully a veto threat of any bill setting up a Department of Homeland Security which does not give this White House sweeping new powers, sweeping new powers to abolish workers rights and workers protections.

Imagine that; imagine a veto that would do that. I think the agenda of this White House is becoming very, very clear. And we had better pause, we had better stop, we had better look, and we had better listen. Talk about passing this massive new law, creating a massive, monstrous behemoth by September 11, by an artificial deadline! This legislation would emasculate certain portions of this Constitution

which I hold in my hand—emasculate it! Trample it into the dirt!

Mr. President, I have been here 50 years. I am not in the Senate today because I need a Senate salary. I could have retired 2 years ago when my 7th term was completed. I could be drawing a check today, a retirement check. I have been in the Senate and the House 50 years. I don't have to work here to put bread and butter on the table for my wife, to whom I have been wed 65 years and 2 months, the day before yesterday. I don't have to have it. Why am I here? I should be at home with her. I should be living with my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, enjoying a little leisure at the end of a long, long worklife that began in the mining camps of southern West Virginia a long time ago.

No, I am here to protect this Constitution and this Institution of which you, Senator, from Minnesota, and you, Senator, from Hawaii, and 97 other Senators are a part. That is it. Some give their lives on the battlefield in wars. There are others of us who give our lives in public service. I am one of them.

Let's slow down. We don't know what the unintended consequences will be of the passage of this legislation. Study the House bill. Study the House-passed bill. The House passed a bill after 2 days of debate. I believe there were 132 Members of the House who voted against that bill. Were they against homeland security? No! Those Members of the House who voted against that bill were as much for homeland security as I am, as much as the President of the United States is. They were for homeland security. I am for homeland security. I defy anyone to say that the Senator in the chair, that the Senator who sits just behind me, or any other Senator, is against homeland security.

Many times I have stood before that desk up there and put my hand on the Holy Bible, and I have sworn to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. That is why I am here. We are in too big a hurry to pass this bill. For what reason? Because there is an election coming on.

And then there were some well intentioned souls, but so gullible, as to suggest that we ought to do this big "thing" before September 11 or by September 11, the anniversary of the most horrendous attack against this country that has ever occurred. Why September 11?

We have a duty to discuss this bill at length. I say to all Senators, Republicans and Democrats, hear me, the people out there across this country are not clamoring for this legislation. The politicians are clamoring for it. The same people who will work under this new Homeland Security Department are already working today for homeland security in the various agencies that will be transferred to this department. They are already on the job. The Appropriations Committees of

both Houses have already acted to release funds for homeland security time and time again, last year and this year.

Then, the people of this country are being urged to pressure their representatives to act on this Department. This Department was conceived in the bowels of the White House by four Federal workers—four members of the White House staff!

Take time to study what we are about to do! Read title 8 of the House-passed bill. It scares me! Read title 8.

I think the agenda of this White House is becoming very clear. It is not homeland security that this White House is lusting after. Bin Laden is not the only target at which this administration is pointing its six-gun. Clearly in the bull's eye is also the job security of thousands of Federal employees and the core values of rights for the workers. And there it is. I will have more to say on this subject.

I am talking about the Constitution and about this Institution, Mr. President. Think of it! Think of the blood that has been shed by men and women over these past 216 years to uphold this Constitution, to protect the security of this country.

There is a man in the chair (Mr. CLELAND) who has given everything but his life for his country. I would be ashamed to run against him. I would be ashamed to be a candidate, put myself up against that man—or this man here behind me (Mr. INOUE).

We had better go slow. We can easily tear down in a few weeks what it has taken centuries to build.

I saw them tearing a building down,
A group of men in a busy town;
With a "Ho, heave, ho" and a lusty yell,
They swung a beam and the sidewall fell.
I said to the foreman, "Are these men skilled
The type you'd hire if you had to build?"
He laughed, and then he said, "No, indeed,
Just common labor is all I need;
I can easily wreck in a day or two,
That which takes builders years to do."
I said to myself as I walked away,
"Which of these roles am I trying to play?
Am I a builder who works with care,
Building my life by the rule and square?
Am I shaping my deeds by a well-laid plan,
Patiently building the best I can?
Or am I a wrecker who walks the town,
Content with the labor of tearing down?"

CRISIS IN HAITI

Mr. DODD. First, I commend my colleague from Hawaii for his fine leadership on the pending matter before the Senate dealing with the Defense appropriations bill.

The matter that I wish to address regards the nation of Haiti, a tragedy that is unfolding a short distance from our own shores, literally only 90 or 100 miles away from the coast of the United States. As yesterday's New York Times article entitled "Eight Years After Invasion, Haiti's Squalor Worsens," written by David Gonzalez, makes abundantly clear, the people of Haiti in that article, as we know, are on the verge of despair.

I ask unanimous consent that the article written by David Gonzalez in the New York Times be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EIGHT YEARS AFTER INVASION, HAITI'S SQUALOR WORSENS

Sonia Jean-Pierre's life is one of apocalyptic misery. With hardly any food or work, her only refuge is a concrete cell. The searing sun is blotted out by cardboard pasted over the windows. On the wall by her bed, she has scrawled, "Jesus Christ is coming soon," like a promise of salvation to greet her every morning.

Ms. Jean-Pierre and hundreds of neighbors live as squatters inside the old Fort Dimanche Prison once the brutally efficient killing chamber of the Duvalier dictatorships. A prison no longer, it has been renamed, hopefully, Village Democratie. The poor cram themselves into the dingy cells and even inside the old sentry towers that look out over the surrounding shanties, where 2,000 more souls live without water, schools or electricity. Some are so desperate they eat pancakelike disks of bouillon-flavored clay. Poverty is the only jailer.

"We are free prisoners," said Ms. Jean-Pierre, who rested one recent afternoon on the cool concrete floor. "We are still living like prisoners."

Nearly eight years after the United States led an invasion of Haiti to oust a military junta and restore President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power, Village Democratie is just one measure of this country's despairing slide.

Increasingly exasperated with Mr. Aristide's government, which has yet to resolve a two-year-old deadlock with its opposition, the United States and European countries have blocked some \$500 million in aid, hoping to encourage greater democracy. Critics say the decision has merely eroded the hopes and deepened the poverty of this country's seven million or so people.

For a nation as poor as Haiti, withholding the money has become both carrot and stick. Haiti still lingers near the bottom of the United Nations' annual survey of living conditions. Life expectancy is less than 53 years. Preventable diseases go untreated. The yearly income of the average family is less than is needed to sustain a single person.

Mr. Aristide calls the withholding of the aid an "embargo." His American supporters, including the Congressional Black Caucus and well-paid lobbyists, say it is immoral to withhold the aid and punish the Haitian people, as government agencies go without budgets, plans or projects to provide water, health care and schools. Some \$150 million from the United States, they note, might not only improve roads, water and health but also create jobs.

Still, diplomats and aid officials say, Mr. Aristide's use of the term "embargo" reflects calculated rhetoric more than reality. Trade and travel continue, and relief, including contributions from the United States, flows into Haiti through nongovernmental groups. Solving Haiti's problems, they argue, will take more than just an infusion of aid. Most important, they say Mr. Aristide has yet to prove that his government has escaped the corruption and destructive self-interest of governments past.

Meanwhile, the political stalemate, which arose over a disputed election, and the international response to it, have stalled what little functioning government democracy might have brought.

"The situation is getting worse for the majority of the people," said the Rev. Jan

Hanssens, a Roman Catholic priest who sits on the Justice and Peace Commission of the Bishops' Conference. "There is certainly no hope unless there is a drastic reassessment of Haitian society itself. If things simply go on as now, there is no chance."

Along the streets of Village Democratie, faith in politicians is as elusive as a decent job. Faded posters of Mr. Aristide, wearing the presidential sash and with his arms outstretched, are his only presence.

Laughing young men crouched at the entrance to the former prison and gambled a few wrinkled gourde notes, the country's currency. Inside, past corridors whose crumbled walls reveal a weed-choked courtyard, people walked home after church clutching hymnals titled "Songs of Hope."

Inside tiny rooms with cardboard walls, slim shafts of sunlight cut through the haze of charcoal smoke from braziers where pots of rice boiled. There are no sewers or running water anywhere in the neighborhood, and when the rains come they leave fetid puddles where malaria-carrying mosquitoes breed.

"Artistide said here is the room of the people," said Dorlis Ephesans. "But he has never showed his face here."

Some of the residents had tried to leave Haiti during the 1991 coup that ousted Mr. Aristide. Some made it to Miami, some died and others like Israel Arince, were caught at sea and returned.

The same America that sent him back to Haiti and restored Mr. Aristide to power in 1994, Mr. Arince said, now make life impossible.

"They have blocked the country from getting aid," he said. "We are human beings and we do not like to live like this. Only animals should live here."

In La Saline sum, down a busy road near the prison that is often choked with carts and traffic, pigs waded through streams of human waste and poked their snouts into mountains of garbage in a drainage canal. Young women dropped plastic buckets into a sewer and hauled out a gray water they would use to wash their floors. Potable water is too expensive.

"There is no way to be healthy here," said Elisena Nicolas, who spends a third of her income on water. "But you have to keep the children clean."

As hard as it is to conceive, people come to La Saline to escape rural misery. In the Central Plateau town of Cange, doctors with the Zanmi Lasante clinic and children commonly died from malaria or diarrhea, while tuberculosis and AIDS killed their parents. Even polio, once thought to have been eradicated, has resurfaced recently.

Although the clinic receives no international aid, doctors said they worked with many Haitian government clinics in nearby villages where the frozen aid has left them unable to cope. In recent years, their volunteer clinic's patient load has tripled to 120,000, with patients sometimes walking five hours for free care.

Dr. Paul Farmer, an American who helped found the clinic in the 1980's, said he could not prove that the blocked aid resulted in more suffering, but the deteriorating conditions were evident. International aid, provided on an emergency basis to charitable groups, was no substitute for a working government, he said.

"One of the world's most powerful countries is taking on one of the most impoverished," he said of the United States decision to withhold aid. "I object to that on moral grounds. Anybody who presides over this blockade needs to know the impact here already."

But Haiti's record of official corruption and mismanagement, regardless of who was in power, has given pause to many international aid officials. A recent study by the World Bank concluded that 15 years of aid